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DE RUEHWN #0023/01 0052039
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RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEHCV/USDAO CARACAS VE PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J5 MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 000023

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DEPT FOR WHA/CAR, SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/06/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [GJ](#) [XL](#)

SUBJECT: GRENADA TRYING TO READ ST. LUCIA TEA LEAVES

REF: A. BRIDGETOWN 2202

[1](#)B. BRIDGETOWN 2180

Classified By: DCM Mary Ellen T. Gilroy for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Grenadians are reading the tea leaves of the St. Lucia election, hoping to find clues to their own future.

Speculation is rampant that Prime Minister Keith Mitchell will call elections following Cricket World Cup in an attempt to ride the expected popular high following successful games.

Although elections have not actually been called, both political parties are campaigning. The problem for Grenada in trying to read the surprise opposition victory in St. Lucia as a harbinger for things to come is that, unlike in St. Lucia, there does not appear to be a comparable respected elder statesman to turn to.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The end-of-year debate on the budget bill the government of Grenada presented to parliament on December 15 was less a discussion of the specific proposals and more a staking out of positions for the expected election. The opposition walked out of the budget debate on December 20 when the Speaker of Parliament chided opposition member Peter David for bringing up unrelated issues when the latter referred to an alleged video of PM Mitchell taking money from a corrupt businessman. A vigil against corruption was held on the Careenage (a popular gathering spot on St. George's waterfront) the same evening which appears to be the primary issue the opposition will run on. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (U) Grenada's Prime Minister Keith Mitchell congratulated Sir John Compton immediately following the opposition United Workers Party's (UWP) December 11 electoral victory in St. Lucia, hailing Sir John as a "leader with experience and vision." Mitchell said Compton was one of those who provided help to him when he assumed office in 1995. Compton, Mitchell added, will play a "crucial leadership role in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)." PM Mitchell pledged to continue the close working relationship Grenada and St. Lucia have enjoyed.

HARBINGER OF CHANGE IN GRENADA?

[1](#)4. (C) Official congratulations aside, many in Grenada are wondering whether Compton's victory foreshadows the outcome of the next Grenada election, expected sometime after Cricket World Cup, possibly as early as fall 2007 (though not required until, at the latest, January 2009). Initial press reporting about St. Lucia's election was mostly factual, followed by more nuanced reactions, including barely

controlled elation among opposition politicians who see the UWP victory in St. Lucia as a clear indication that regional political trends are going their way. For their part, the Grenada's opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) hammers away at themes similar to those used in the St. Lucia campaign, e.g., corruption, arrogance of the ruling party (the New National Party, or NNP) which has "lost touch with the people." The NDC relies on reporting from the U.S. and elsewhere, and continues to call on the government to investigate these allegations, rather than seeking out and providing convincing evidence on their own. If even half of what the critics claim is true, there is some very serious official corrupt activity taking place in Grenada. The NDC approach is to throw out accusations and taunt the NNP to prove them wrong. This is good political theatre, and fun to watch. It is not, however, very edifying.

15. (C) Grenada has very free, but rather lazy, media, that devote relatively few resources to serious investigative reporting, relying instead on editorials heavy with innuendo and call-in radio and television shows, as well as reports (unchecked) from elsewhere, including the U.S., Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The two main television news shows, running 30 minutes each evening, are generally pretty good at reporting what is happening, but do not delve very far beneath the surface. This combination of political attacks and innuendo leaves the public with an increasingly uneasy feeling about their government. The NDC, which has yet to offer any clear explanation of what an NDC government would offer, obviously believes that such an approach will work in their favor. A number of Embassy contacts agree that it will. They also agree that the public is confused. One reflected the mood best when he said, "People want change; they don't know why, but they want something different. When it happens, they may be unhappy, because what they get may not be what they thought they were promised." Should the NDC win the next elections--and many here are convinced they have a good shot at doing so--it may be as much change for change's sake as support for a, thus far, nebulous NDC agenda.

FOCUS ON CORRUPTION ALLEGATIONS

16. (C) On December 20, during the budget debate, the opposition staged a walkout after the Speaker of Parliament chided NDC member Peter David for straying from the issue at hand when he brought up an ongoing case in which the Prime Minister is alleged to have taken US\$500,000 from a German businessman and was apparently caught on video. David called on the Attorney General to officially request the USG to assist in getting a copy of the video from the state court in Massachusetts that has it (NOTE: Mitchell maintains he received US\$15,000 to cover travel expenses, not US\$500,000. The Commission of Inquiry set up in June 2005 by the Governor General to investigate the allegations adjourned after hearing several witnesses' testimony without finding Mitchell guilty of any wrongdoing. Offshore Alert--the Miami-based newsletter that originally broke the story--periodically publishes articles reiterating the charges and most recently claims the inquiry is on hold as the leader of the opposition, Tillman Thomas, sued shortly after the inquiry began for an opposition lawyer to participate in questioning witnesses. The article states that the court action must be completed before the Commission may resume its work. Post cannot confirm the accuracy of these statements. As recently as December 16, PM Mitchell felt forced to defend his actions, issuing a long statement again denying the charges. As long as the case remains unresolved, the NDC has the perfect club with which to bludgeon the NNP. END NOTE.)

17. (C) The government on November 29 introduced two very serious anti-corruption bills: the Integrity in Public Life Bill and The Prevention of Corruption Bill, which would require all public officials to report all income and establish an Integrity Commission to oversee the reports and review government practices in order to provide public accountability of all government officials. Both bills received one reading, of the required three, but have been

put aside as Parliament tries to pass the 2007 budget bill. The opposition has not tipped its hand about whether it will support the bills, presumably either because they do not want the NNP government to get credit for passing the legislation or because they are concerned that the requirements will be too tough on them, should they take over in the next election.

COMMENT

18. (C) Grenada does not have an elder statesman waiting in the wings to swoop the electorate off its feet as Compton did in St. Lucia. There are rumors that, should the NDC win the next election, its current leader might be pushed aside by others in the party who do not believe Tillman Thomas is ideologically pure enough (though in conversations with Charge, Thomas still espouses the revolutionary party line). The political roots of many in the NDC, including Thomas, go back to the now-defunct political parties which staged the revolution of 1979 deposing then-Prime Minister Eric Gairy in a bloodless coup. Thomas spent time in prison during the revolutionary period, having fallen afoul of its leaders. Grenada's revolution ultimately collapsed amid bloody infighting, triggering the U.S.-Caribbean military intervention of October 25, 1983. Even if the NDC wins the next election with Thomas as its leader, an internal power struggle may ensue over who will ultimately be Grenada's next Prime Minister.

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